# The Governor's Statewide Youth Council Midterm Report

December 2009



The Governor's Statewide Youth Council at the Youth Summit, October 2009

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Executive Order

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council, to quote its Chair Patrick Johnson, was "started from the ground up." From Governor Patrick's visit to a Dorchester neighborhood, listening to youth residents, to the four youth-led planning meetings that were held around the state, the Youth Council has been an exercise in the implementation of grassroots organizing.

Each phase of the Council's development has been guided by its members. They have told us what they wanted, what they needed, and the best way to go about achieving those goals. In so doing, they have built relationships with one another and have formed a tight network that, as you will see, has accomplished a great deal in a relatively short amount of time.

The structure of this report mirrors one of the Youth Council training sessions with Harvard University professor Marshall Ganz, a community organizer who is widely acclaimed for his expertise in grassroots initiatives. Professor Ganz uses a narrative structure to divide an organization's goals into three phases: Self, Us and Now. This report is therefore organized in that same manner. The first section consists of individuals' statements and stories, the second records their collective experiences and the third outlines their plans for moving forward as a Council.

For me as a community organizer, the development of the Youth Council has been a profound education. Even though the presidential campaign of Barack Obama brought grassroots organizing into the mainstream, my background was primarily in organizing from the outside. However, I recognized that the success of the Youth Council depended on learning to organize from the inside. I would like to thank Dr. Ganz for his help and assistance as the Council members discovered the structure and discipline that would ensure their success.

I view the development of the Youth Council as a new way of thinking about the structure of an advocacy group. Since it was built from the ground up, it has a better chance to be efficient and productive because it's truly created by the individuals who have the greatest investment in the outcome.

Several Youth Council members have written about the occasion when, at an early meeting, the members took control in order to determine the structure and content of future meetings and events. For me too, this was a decisive moment because as an adult in a position of authority, it is all-too-easy to forget the homily that "the best experts are those closest to the problem." Although I have always maintained that view, I needed to be reminded that this is *their* Council and will only be successful if we listen to them. In all my experiences with them, they have been well worth listening to.

— Ron Bell Director, Office of Community Affairs

On a clear fall day over a year ago now, twenty-eight young people met in the high-ceilinged Grand Staircase on the Second Floor of the State House. There was a lot of silence as we sat in rows waiting for the Governor to swear us in. The Governor spoke, and we were quiet. One of the things he said was, "We created this council because you asked for it."

A year before, Governor Patrick had visited a Dorchester neighborhood in Boston that had been plagued by a string of violent, youth-related murders. Walking around and attempting to console the residents, the Governor met a girl named Shanaya, who was sitting with fellow members of Dorchester's B.O.L.D.TEENS. Without hesitation, she asked the Governor why youth didn't have a voice in shaping the policies that affected them, This was a bold statement, a challenge to the Governor to mobilize state government to do as she suggested: give youth a voice in shaping the policies that affect us every day.

In the following year, Governor Patrick formed a Working Group, comprised of state and private sector employees, and together with the Governor's Office of Community Affairs, conducted a vigorous search and extensive application process resulting in the selection of 28 members of the First Statewide Youth Council. It was composed of two members representing each of the 14 state counties, serving two-year terms.

Several weeks later we had our first meeting at 10 a.m. on a Saturday morning in Worcester. This was a bit early for some members, but as our energized facilitators woke us up, and sparked our outgoing spirits, we started to get to know each other. As I sat in the meeting, I began to realize the potential power of the people around me, from all different backgrounds and upbringings, and from every corner of the Commonwealth.

Since that time, as you will see in this report, a great deal has happened. On behalf of my fellow Youth Council members, I would like to thank Governor Patrick for this incredible opportunity to have a voice in state government. We are all looking forward to the work ahead.

Patrick JohnsonYouth Council Chair

# **SELF**Who we are as individuals

On September 12, 2008 twenty-eight enthusiastic, high-spirited young people with dreams of change were sworn into service of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. Since that time we have been working hard to accomplish goals that together we created. Our first task at hand was to create a united team that could then move forward to choose an issue to focus our talents on and create change.

The Youth Council is a diverse group of dedicated young people who have come together for the common cause of improving the youth voice and action throughout the Commonwealth. Over time, we have created strong interpersonal bonds that enhance our ability to work together. Through rules we established and votes we took, we've learned how to make the Council flow efficiently. We've been trained in various areas to help us move forward and to make our dreams a reality. Our first year has been a learning process that has guided us to the primary issue we have decided to first address: youth violence prevention through education.

Our purpose with this report is to provide an in-depth perspective of who we are as individuals, who we are collectively as a Council, and what our plans are to impact the future of youth across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Valerie DiCristoforoYouth Council Member

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#### **Patrick Johnson**

I was drawn to apply to the Governor's Stateself wide Youth Council because of the way in which it had started. The creation of the Council stemmed from a tragic series of youth-related

violence within the Commonwealth, but these events became a motivating factor for was intrigued, because not too often is a force for input met with the need for it. The Council has always been a

symbiotic relationship between young people starving to serve their communities and political minds starving for fresh perspectives. At the swearing in ceremony, the Governor said, "We created the Council because you asked for it." Since then, Council members have formed a

bond and developed a team spirit that none of us could have anticipated.

As members of this Council, many of us have had to overcome our fears. Some of us were too shy to stand in front of a group of

our peers. Others had never before met someone who had been a gang member, or who had experienced abject poverty. What has come out

of this is that a youth from Lawrence has developed a bond with another from Pittsfield, and a youth from Brewster with one from Springfield. In this way, the Youth Council has become a symbol of hope for the future of our



Commonwealth — a future in which we are not bogged down by petty regional differences, but share a stake in the collective futures of our neighbors. Consequently, the livelihood of a youth in Methuen matters to a youth in Shrewsbury. No matter what else we may have accomplished, nothing can transcend the fact that we accomplished it with a spirit of unselfishness and common aspiration. It's not the seven meetings we've held or the activities and forums in which we've participated in that matter to us, it's the fact that we've created a model for people of all walks of life to work with a common purpose.

#### **Lauren Logan**

When I applied to join the Governor's Statewide Youth Council in May of 2008, I had a vision of the enormous change that could be

> initiated by twenty-eight young people from across the state. Since then, I believe that we are already on the road to great success by striving to significantly improve the lives of our peers.

> One of my expectations was that we would try to include the

voices of our peers who aren't civically engaged. We tend to overlook those who don't participate in organized school or community groups and those who are not voicing their opinions. We often forget that their voices matter too. The youth community in Massachusetts is composed of

many different voices and opinions and the only way for us to define a common vision is to accept a diversity of views. The youth summit we hosted in October of this year represented the start of this goal.

I am extremely thankful to have been chosen as a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council because my experience

as a Council member has widened my perspective of others' unique lifestyles. I believe I am now a more effective leader in my community because I have had the opportunity of learning how others lead and the ways in which they are different from me.



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— Patrick Johnson

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engaged. — Lauren Logan



#### **Louisa Wilde Carman**

My original goal in applying to the Governor's Statewide Youth Council was to use it as a catalyst for changing energy policy to protect the environment. I wanted to involve youth in that process and take real steps on an issue that I thought was important. Although I still recognize how dire our energy situation is, I no longer see that as the Council's main focus. During the Youth Council Orientation, we had a session called "Raw and Uncut," during which everyone shared their reasons for applying to the Council. It was an eye-opening experience for me, as many of my



peers had experienced brutal encounters with drug use, violence and lack of educational opportunities. The exercise proved to me that although solving the energy crisis is imperative, there are more pressing issues. We first need to focus on making it safe for youth to walk down the streets without being mugged, and to

ensure that every student will receive an acceptable education. Although my original objectives

have not been the center of attention on this Council, I feel that we are making progress that will positively influence the youth in our state. This has been an incredible experience, and I know that it will only become richer as the Council evolves.

It has become clear to me that a just democratic group does not only need a voting system, but that it is equally important for them to have an impartial forum where advocates of every position are able to speak their minds. — Daniel Tassone

#### **Daniel Tassone**

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has given me an in-depth, detailed look at the inner workings of the state's democratic system. The Council is based on the principal that the only way to make change is through *action*, and with this philosophy we have accomplished a lot in only one year. I was first attracted to the Council by the notion of representing Berkshire County — a community of which I am incredibly proud because of its outstanding reputation in the



performing arts, its dedication to wildlife preservation, and the close-knit neighborhoods that exist in every town. Because of our distance from Boston, I had never before had an opportunity to be involved in state politics. The Youth Council has given me the opportunity to see how Massachusetts is run and to influence

how youth-related issues are addressed.

During our orientation session, each member told the story of his or her life, and explained what has shaped them into who they are today. Although each person's story was unique, they all ended with a unifying quality: the desire to make a difference. Our comfort with one another has ensured that we can discuss, debate, and compromise when tackling issues that afflict youth within the state.

At our first official meeting, I developed a considerable admiration for the adult facilitators. They had developed an agenda for us that laid out the topics we would discuss throughout the day. However, as the meeting moved forward, the Council members became frustrated with the structure and asked to develop a different meeting plan. Without hesitation, the facilitators gave us control over the day's events, and have continued to do so for each successive meeting. This level of adult trust in teenagers is rare, which is why the structure of the Council is *especially* innovative.

I never dreamed that we would accomplish so

much in our first year. I imagined the time would be filled with endless brainstorming sessions or a never-ending quest for structure. Instead, I have watched the Council grow into a mature, focused group that is capable of tackling any issue. Over the past twelve months I

have learned invaluable information about what constitutes a fair government body. It has become clear to me that a just democratic group does not only need a voting system, but that it is equally important for them to have an impartial forum where advocates of every position are able to speak their minds. Before joining the Council, I never realized the true importance of open communication in a government body. Although this process can sometimes prevent us from making quick decisions, I believe that our first year has effectively laid the foundations for what will be a *vital* body for years to come.

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#### **Rashad Coleman**

Everyone around me was excited by my acceptance to the Youth Council and for this opportunity, especially with some of

opportunity, especially with some of the past circumstances of my life. I was somewhat skeptical because with my background, I don't often have these kinds of opportunities. I was nervous about not knowing who the other members would be, or if we would get along. I half expected to see the Governor himself, people in suits, and a

serious type of atmosphere. For me, not knowing can put me in an uncomfortable state of mind.

But everyone involved — both adult supervisors and other Council members — have been great people. At first, I felt out of place because I don't have the most positive personal history and I've made some mistakes in the past. Also, I've never been into politics or civic engagement. These feelings combined with a somewhat strenuous atmosphere at home had me questioning being part of the Council.

After a conversation with Office of Community Affairs Director Ron Bell and his Assistant Director, Anny Jean-Jacques, however, I realized I might not be the only member with these concerns and that I should give myself a chance. All the Youth Council members have one thing in common: we just want to make a difference. Our backgrounds or knowledge of politics do not affect this ability. All in all, I enjoy the Council for what it has to offer and I hope we can all work together in an effort to make a difference for our state and beyond.

#### **Lillian Phuong**

It was through my involvement with Team FRESH (Fall River Extends Supportive Hands), that I heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. I applied because I had the desire to serve a wider community. I felt honored to be one of few chosen to represent my state, and only one of two chosen to represent

Bristol County.

We all had assumed

that the creation of the

Council was a superficial

gesture, but as the year

passed, we were proven

wrong. — Lillian Phuong

At the same time, I had some reservations. One was the age range from 14-20, allowing members to be as much as six years apart. I was also concerned that the Council would consist of dull, solitary work, since the scheduled meetings were only four times a year.

In reality, however, the Council members proved to be engaging but more importantly, we all shared the common goal of wanting better communities for our youth. The Youth Council has evolved into a family and, over time, the number of meetings multiplied as we realized that more communication was necessary to produce significant change.

After meeting the other Council members, I realized that my assumptions were correct: everyone had been nervous about the selection process. We all had assumed that the creation of the Council was a superficial gesture, but as the year passed, we were proven wrong. The

Council has indeed allowed its youth members to represent their communities and bring forth issues to resolve.

At the first couple of meetings, I felt like nothing was being accomplished, but I soon realized that

everyone else felt the same way. At one of our early meetings, we confronted Ron Bell, the Director of Community Affairs and Anny Jean-Jacques, the Assistant Director of Community Affairs, with our feelings that the meetings were consumed with recapping everything from the last meeting. Hearing this, Ron



and Anny agreed to scrap the rest of the agenda and allow us to plan for ourselves. From that point on, we elected a Chair and every meeting since has been youth-led and facilitated.

Although the Council had planned quarterly meetings, we decided that was not enough to be productive and have held additional meetings and conferences. Many members have also attended other events. As a council, we have worked together to plan the Youth Summit that took place on October 24, 2009. We have also been brainstorming other ways to advise and lead the youth in Massachusetts. The Youth Council structure affords us adult support that other organizations don't have, and we are able to use it to further our work together.

# **Adult Sponsor**

#### **Talitha Abramsen**

My first expectations were

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— James Flynn

ing as it has turned out to be.

It has been both an immense pleasure and privilege to act as an Adult Sponsor for one of the Youth Council members, Natasha Gonzalez (representing Hampshire County), on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. As I have accompanied Natasha to the Youth Council meetings I have seen a disparate group of young people who were committed to the causes and interests of their specific communities, and to building a wider, more inclusive community that was fueled by a collective vision they forged together; a

collective and compelling vision for how the Commonwealth could better serve young people and vice versa. These Youth Council members have modeled and practiced participatory governing at each stage, honing their leadership skills and ability to organize resources, support and peers through

After a year of working as a leadership body, they have come out stronger and energized as a result of the broad based ownership they have cultivated among their peers. Since this body of leaders were sworn in, they have continually been a beacon for their Adult Sponsors, re-energizing us, offering us hope and a clear vision of an alternate future. They have also demonstrated to us, as adults, how young people's capacities and skill sets still remain underutilized, underestimated, and undervalued in the greater adult-led communities, resulting in a tremendous loss of human and community resources and innovation. I am so excited to see the impact the Youth Council will make as it enters its second year, and am proud to play a supportive role to such a powerful group of community and statewide leaders.

compelling stories and bold goal setting.



#### **James Flynn**

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I joined the Youth Council to better my knowledge of government and to learn how our state functions in day-to-day processes. I was interested in how government can ensure that all Massachusetts citizens have a safe environment to live, learn and work in and to provide the care and attention that each individual needs. I wanted to change things that not only affect me, but that also could be considered common issues among teens in Massachusetts.

> I also hoped that I could change the ways in which future generations setts will live. Teenagers tant age groups in the Commonwealth, because they are making a transia much larger environ-

ment like a college or trade school and after that, to the work force. I believe that the state needs to work on helping teenagers in that transition, whether they are going to attend a local or out-of -state college.

My first expectations were that, as a government body, the Council might be dull, knowing that the government process can be slow. I never imagined it would be as vigorous and exciting as it has turned out to be. At each meeting, everyone puts forth their own opinions without the fear of being unaccepted or ignored. With such an involved group of teens I hope that our next year can be even better, and that we can accomplish as much as possible before we are replaced with a new group of brilliant young minds who also wish to do as much for the state's youth, if not more, than what we can accomplish.

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#### **Stanley Narcisse**

I grew up with a single mom. As the oldest of three children, I was always involved in causes such as community service and helping others. We lived in a North Cambridge public housing project, where I constantly witnessed violence, pain, and suffering. It was unpleasant because the young people were routinely exposed to gang violence! Now, I live in Haverhill, where I'm involved with many non-profit organizations; one being the Violence Intervention Prevention team. I'm also, along with my adult mentor, a HIPP (Help Increase The Peace Program) cofacilitator.

I was introduced to the Youth Council through

an adult mentor. My first thought was that I didn't have a chance of being selected because my resume wasn't good enough to qualify me for this opportunity. I've since witnessed a dramatic change in myself. First, I've grown intellectually and spiritually, and have been exposed to issues such as civics. Second, I've acquired a better understanding of people

and my peers. I've created new friendships with great people whom I would have never thought of encountering and feel as if I'm part of a family

to whom I've grown close. I'm very humbled by the opportunity I've been given and am excited to be able to contribute as much as I can to the Council. I feel that we have a lot to offer and that we're going to



I've grown close.

#### **Estephania Villar**

Serving on the Youth Council has been a lifechanging experience. I learned about the Council through Girls Incorporated of Lynn. The Council has not only made me a better leader in my community, but has given me many opportunities



to work with adult role models within my community and has provided me with the chance to interact with teens from all over Massachusetts. At first, I felt that even though I

confident in answering

questions and speak-

was helping my community, it wasn't enough. Seeing that other Council members felt the same way has really helped me. The Council has improved my self-esteem, improved my tact and has boosted my confidence. For example, initially

when I was asked a I've grown intellectually and spirituquestion I would lack ally, and have been exposed to issues confidence that my such as civics. Second, I've acquired a answers were right or better understanding of people and were good enough. my peers. I've created new friendships Being a Youth Council member has shown me with great people whom I would have that there's really no never thought of encountering and such thing as a good or feel as if I'm part of a family to whom bad, right or wrong answer. Now I'm more

— Stanley Narcisse

ing to people.

The Youth Council has opened many doors for me and because of it I am now able to speak at local meetings about the Council's accomplishments and future goals. For me, the most memorable experience was when our adult facilitators had an itinerary planned for us and it was not what we were expecting. Since that incident, all events have been youth-led. The Governor's Youth Council has been an amazing experience that has helped shape me into the outstanding leader I am today.



#### **Cathryn LaMontagne**

When I was first accepted into the Governors Council, I had many questions. What type of change were we capable of making? Could a group of teens make a real impact on our government? Could *I* make an impact on my government? My questions were answered on my first day with the swearing-in ceremony at the State House. As I talked to my fellow Council members, I realized there are many other youth who genuinely care about these issues and are ready to dedicate their time and effort to make a change.

Although I had felt that other members weren't

going to understand what I've been through, I was wrong. Talking with them and sharing stories, I realized what great people these were. This experience has led me to become a better person because it has given me a clearer understanding of what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes.



Being on the Council has not only opened doors of opportunity, but it has opened my eyes and has given me a new outlook on our state. At the age of 16, I had dropped out of high school, gotten my GED, and went straight to college. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared, for it was one of the most intimidating experiences of my life. Getting out of that negative environment into something better was an opportunity that I wanted to share with all youth who had the same problem. Being on the Council not only gave me that chance to speak my mind, but has also given me the tools to help others. I look forward to continuing my time as a Council member.

#### Mirasia McGahan

I feel called to civic engagement because I have the passion and power to help others avoid some of the negative experiences I've had. I have a language-based learning disability that went undiagnosed until high school. It prevented me from expressing myself in writing and sometimes, when speaking. Consequently, I was required to repeat many classes and was constantly trying to prove that I was up to grade level. I ended up taking classes at the community college for high school credit and I finally feel successful. I want to help make the high school experience 100

times better than mine. I do not want anyone who has a disability to be treated differently or be discriminated against. I do not want other teens to experience what I went through.

I became interested in community work because, although there are many programs for younger teens, there are none for older youth. I believe this is one reason that teens can get involved in unhealthy activities. I hope to create a program to help youth get into healthy programs such as dance, team sports, snowboarding, paintball and Pokémon clubs. I would also like to create a group for teens who may be at risk for drug involvement, and a Big Brother/Big Sister type of program.

Another issue that has affected me is that my mother is white and my father is Puerto Rican. Because of this I have had a hard time fitting into a group. At times, I have felt more comfortable with people of color because they accepted me, but in the end, I felt left out because I was too "white" to be invited to special events because of my ethnicity. I know that I am not the only person who has had this experience and I want to make people aware of how hurtful behaviors can leave someone on the outside.

Another struggle has been growing up in a single-parent household. This makes it hard to do certain things that many two-parent families

can do, especially with respect to money. I was also very fortunate for the many things I was able to do, such as being a competitive gymnast for eight years.

The Youth Council has been an amazing and sometimes frustrating experience. Amazing in that

it affords me the opportunity to work with a group of dedicated, caring people and to have the chance to build a strong community. At the same time, it can be frustrating because the group process requires a lot of patience. Group dynamics can be challenging because there is often competition for power and control. Another important lesson that I have learned is that it is extremely important for a big group to stay on task to get things done.

So far, I have not been working directly with my community and, for this reason, I am excited to begin the second year of the Council because I want to be out in the community helping others. I am looking forward to being an advocate for teens and a liaison between teens and adults. I hope to do my best in serving the Council and making my county proud.

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#### Valerie DiCristoforo

I'll always remember the day when I was a freshman at Monson High School, when an event intended to create understanding toward others was turned into a day that everybody wished they could erase from their memories. That day, drawings were shown of an African-American victim with a noose around his neck hanging from a tree. This picture, drawn by one of my classmates, included white people standing below the man

hanging from the tree laughing and pointing. The drawing was photocopied and prints were distributed throughout the school. On this same day, students from Putnam High, an innercity vocational school in Springfield, were visiting our predominantly white, middle class, rural high school. It was



part of a student exchange program coordinated by my school's diversity club. At that time, we had about eight students who were not white and it was easy to tell who wasn't from Monson.

I had never thought of my town as racist, even though we have practically no diversity. I could have never predicted that someone from my high school would coordinate such an act of hate. What were they thinking when they drew those horrible pictures and printed hundreds of copies? What were they thinking when they tossed them around the school? I'm sure they weren't thinking of the hurt they would cause the visiting students who were expecting to have a good time, or how others would perceive our high school, or even that their little joke wasn't funny. That day really opened my eyes to the attitudes of some members of my community and I wanted to do something about it.

The diversity among Youth Council members reminded me of the day students from Putnam High had visited my school. When we met for the first time I hoped that together we could make a dramatic change to the way things are in our not-so-perfect society. During the orientation session, we had a raw and uncut session wherein we acknowledged each others' differences in a way that hurt no one and made us stronger as a group. Each of us told the story of why we were there. Diversity made us stronger as a group and brought us together as a committed body with some world-changing common goals. We have all been through many different situations, but together we are one force that I feel very connected to despite the fact that I am not exactly like any one else in the group. Diversity is something that should be embraced and not become a catalyst for an act of hate. Together I hope we can make a change throughout Massachusetts by combining all of our strengths together and forming a collective voice.

#### **Chris Alvarez**

When I was a child, my family traveled a lot. I remember going back and forth between Springfield, MA and New York as we struggled to find a place to live. My mother was unemployed with four children to provide for. Then the death of my grandfather forced us to find the resources to help my mother get into college and get a decent job. We discovered the Alliance to Develop Power (ADP), an organization that helps low-income families fight for and create living wage jobs, get a better education, and save toward the purchase of affordable housing. We joined ADP and ever since I have become a leader in my community, advocating for what is right, from ending youth violence to education reform to helping other youth realize that they don't have to join a gang or sell drugs to make a living, but that with guidance and the right resources they can have a successful life.

Through the Youth Council, I've had the opportunity to meet other youth from around the Commonwealth and I've learned about the issues that affect them. I've also had the opportunity to meet Governor Patrick, since we are working together with him to address youth-related issues. The experience of attending Council workshops and trainings has made me a better leader in my own community and a role model and teacher for youth who are trying to find a voice within their communities. This summer, ADP held a Summer Youth Leadership Academy at which I was one of the organizers. Using the skills and knowledge I learned from the Youth Council, we developed an outreach plan to bring the voices and experiences of youth within our region to the Statewide Youth Summit that was hosted by the Council on October 24.



#### **Salomon Moreno**

In the late 1980's, at the zenith of a civil war tearing apart and ravaging a small Central American nation, my mother decided to pack her things in pursuit of the promise of a better future. She packed into her sack her lifetime savings, the clothes on her back, my two older brothers, and her second grade education, and embarked on the long road from El Salvador to the US by foot. The odds were stacked against her, yet, using her wit, strength, and sheer will power she succeeded in finding us a home free of poverty and ambiguous violence

My road has been paved with my mother's experiences, wisdom and sacrifices. I remind myself of the disenfranchisement that she experienced and strive to help improve the lives of others by using the resources I've been given. Fighting for social justice and civil rights has always been of the highest priority to me, and upon hearing about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, I realized that a better opportunity would be seldom found elsewhere. I wanted to join the Council because I felt that I had a unique perspective to bring to the table. Growing up on the lowest rungs of the American social ladder taught me how to sympathize and relate to the underprivileged. Working with the Council, I hoped to succeed in bringing about tangible change that was visible on a state level as well as locally throughout communities.

The Youth Council met and went far beyond my expectations. I was fortunate enough to meet and become good friends with some of the brightest minds the Commonwealth has to offer. We're a



body of diverse knowledge, backgrounds, experiences, yet we create a single entity with a vision to create improvement for the youth of our state. Every Council member has brought with them their own opinions and ideas that

have fueled the fire to spark action. This past year has been inspiring and influential to my own development — as a student, a son and a human

being. Working with our highly intelligent and respected adult advisors in the Governor's Office has been invaluable to our creation and management, and continues to facilitate our work. The Council is also significant to Massachusetts as the only vehicle for youth to be vocal about the state of affairs in their districts and hometowns. Without the Council, Massachusetts would be unable to equip the next generation of senators, teachers, and lawmakers with the necessary tools to succeed.

#### **Natasha Gonzalez**

Two qualities I think are critical to effective leadership are the abilities to draw from past experience and the commitment to continuously learn. I believe I have many unique skills and attributes that I can offer the Youth Council that have derived from my life experience. Since the age of ten, I have trained youth and adult audiences on issues ranging from youth violence and youth-adult partnerships to white privilege and age discrimination. Some of my experiences come from a position I held in the Youth Adult Partnership Training sector of the YWCA in Northampton where I was part of a youth group that actively sought opportunities to educate people on the importance of cross-generational alliances. Through these

experiences I have gained the confidence to use my voice and efforts for causes of social justice in the greater interests of my community. The Youth Council has provided the forum in which



youth voices, including mine, are not only being heard, but listened to, taken into perspective, considered and put into action. I chose to apply for one of the positions of Hampshire County representative because I believe in the need for change in Massachusetts, not only for youth in my county and community, but for all residents across the state. Through the Youth Council I believe that goals concerning youth-adult partnership development, career development for youth and the expansion of civic participation from different cultures are being met, surpassed and are necessary components to the empowerment of any body of people. I am grateful to have the opportunity to learn from my peers across the Commonwealth and participate in such a Council as this.

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#### **Eddie Mercado**

I applied to the Youth Council to make a change and a difference to teens' lives because I've been a victim of many of the issues teens face within their communities. I saw the Council as an opportunity to increase the presence of a youth voice within the Commonwealth and to enable youth to become more involved within their communities. When I found out that I had been accepted I was really surprised, even though I had attended the four planning meetings, had worked with the Governor's aides throughout the planning process, and knew what was going on.

So far, Council members have worked on

getting the Council to run more smoothly. During this year, we worked on creating a youth summit that would kick off with issues that trigger everything, such as gang violence, education, drug abuse, etc. These are things that are not easy but are possible to change. What I'm getting out of the Youth Council is a chance to help others and create positive



change for the Commonwealth, as well as the opportunity to better educate myself on how government is run.

# Adult **Sponsor**

#### **Catherine Mayes**

This past year it has been my privilege to be a Youth Council Adult Sponsor for my son, Mike Mayes. It was a pleasure to watch Mike and all the incredible Youth Council members find their voices and take civic action seriously. I have constantly been "wowed" by what I've heard and seen from Council members: intelligence, kindness, curiosity, humor, willingness to take risks, and respect for each other from this group of youth leaders. It is truly remarkable! Ron Bell, Anny Jean-Jacques, Glenn Daly and Dahlia Bousaid helped every one of the Council members believe in themselves, and encouraged and supported them.

For me, and I think for Mike, one of the turning points was the weekend spent with Harvard Kennedy School of Government professor Marshall Ganz, Dr. Ganz taught Youth Council members how to share their personal stories to inspire other young people to action. In particular, Dr. Ganz helped Mike to be more skilled and comfortable talking publicly about being an autistic person. Mike learned that if he shared the challenges he experiences as a result of his disability, and spoke publicly about his willingness to be a youth leader despite his disability, it would encourage other people to do the same. People with disabilities, particularly communication disabilities like autism, seldom get this kind of opportunity. For Mike, the impact of participating in the Council, what he learned and the experiences he had, have improved the quality of his life beyond the Council itself. Being a Council member allowed him to believe he could make a difference to others.

Like Mike, all the individual Council members flourished in unique ways because of the opportunity to be taken seriously, and to be given support and encouragement to seriously consider what is important to them and to make their voices heard. It was a pleasure to watch this happen!



#### **River Bennett**

We live in a time in which change is occurring at a rapid pace. During times like this, it's very easy for groups of people to get left behind. Far too often, these groups are without any voice or representation. The Massachusetts Governor's Statewide Youth Council offered the chance for Council members, as well as those they represent, to be heard.

When I attended the orientation session, what I saw was inspiring. Many of us were applying to colleges and experiencing the selectiveness of schools, and I was happy to meet some who had finally been chosen. What excited me most was that I wasn't surrounded by only overachieving, straight-A students. I met individuals from the inner city and others who lived on farms. Some came from families, and some as young as I, live on their own. What we all shared was an unstoppable urge to speak up and be heard. For a somewhat-isolated island kid, it was eye-opening. I

could not have imagined some of the issues that affected youth so close to my own home.

The experience has been enlightening and empowering by showing me the wide range of



viewpoints that contribute to decision making. I have learned a lot about others my age as well as programs that are working for youth and because of youth. I've also gotten a lesson on how my government works and I have a better idea of how difficult it is to come to a conclusion that incorporates everyone's ideas yet is satisfying when the final decision is made. It shows that while government may be slow to act, it is methodically planned out and ultimately, very fair. Although much of our energy this year was put towards defining the Youth Council and its role, I know we have been constructing a strong foundation that will benefit the Youth Council for years to come.

#### **Georgina Morley**

The first year of the Statewide Youth Council has been a very positive experience. Not only have I made 27 other new friends from across the state, but I've also learned much about many wide-ranging issues affecting teens in towns other than my own. Some of these are shared issues, while others are very region-specific. Issues like gang violence may be specific to the western and urban parts of the state, but issues like underage drinking, better education and civic engagement are statewide.



In either case, it's an eyeopening experience to be able to work with other concerned teens to try to solve these problems and help the youth involved.

When I applied to the Council, I did not have many expectations because I knew very little about it because it was brand new. I just hoped it would be another way for me to become more involved in

my government and a chance to make some sort of change. I was pleased to discover that it would be those things and more.

From our first orientation session, I realized that working with the selected group of students would be unique in that everyone was so different. Although we all came from different places and had our own ideas and plans, we were all there to make a change and to work together. This atmosphere has been consistent at every meeting, which makes problem solving easy and constructive.

Another aspect of the Youth Council that is pleasing and impressive is the communication between the Governor's Office staff and the members. I feel like there's always someone available to answer any questions, and to keep me well informed and in the loop about events. Our adult advisors have been very understanding about the challenges I personally face living on Nantucket.

My only problem is in being able to make all of the meetings. This is due to my busy schedule, especially during the summer months, and travel-related difficulties, but I know it will get easier over time to work things out.

I've had a lot of fun and hope to be more involved in the coming year.

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#### **Jose Rodrigues**

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council not only is a great opportunity, but it is also a testimony to how lucky I truly am. I was born into a dysfunctional family.

My mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia and my father, with a bipolar disorder. Luckily, when I was only a few weeks old my aunt and uncle took me in as their own child. They were the parents that I could only have wished for. Their deep roots in their Portuguese heritage



could get along with.

gave me the knowledge of what it was like to be a first-generation born American. I only needed to smell my aunt's cooking to know that I was

home. Yet, I was still not able to accept my parents' illness, and struggled to talk about it. It was only when I was embraced by my religious community that I realized it was okay to be different. Through a group called Life Teen, not only was I able to

find myself, I also learned that it was okay to be different. Life Teen gave me the strength to openly talk about my parents' illness and my family situation. They made it possible for me to give back, and I consequently involved myself in community service projects and religious activities.

In my junior year at high school, I learned

from my Spanish teacher about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. At the last minute, I reluctantly applied, feeling nervous and certain that they would not pick me. My acceptance, however, affirmed what I believed was right. During our first meetings, I hesitated to show who I truly was because I was nervous that I would not be accepted. After the first couple of encounters. I realized that we were all alike and that this was a diverse group of individuals that I could get along with. At our second or third meeting, the Council members took over and decided that we wanted control of the meetings. From that, I saw that the group was ready to take action and make a difference in today's society. The involvement of some of the other members has also inspired me to become more involved. I'm committed to this group, and I can only hope that I can inspire others to also become involved and to make the necessary effort to make a difference.

#### **Andrea Mcdonagh**

Take 28 individuals guided by some amazingly

helpful adult facilitators, travel miles across the state to participate in hours of meetings, pick up the phone for a few conference calls, and you have our newly-born Statewide Youth Council. As strangers from different areas and backgrounds and with different interests,



we grew to know each other and to be able to

work together. We came together and determined our focus: the prevention of youth violence through education. Our first year together has flown by but we're working hard and are

After the first couple of encounters, I realized that we were all alike and that this was a diverse group of individuals that I — Jose Rodrigues on the right track. This incredible experience can

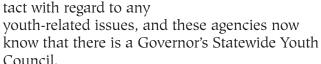
> show that the capabilities, power, and opinions of young people are not to be underestimated. And when our terms are over, and we — 28 strangers who have grown to befriend one other and form this Council — will move on, I hope that our accomplishments and legacy will remain.



#### **Brianna Busby**

As a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, I have been able to advocate for the youth of my community, my county and my state. I have been their voice and have been actively working on getting the agendas of education, jobs, teen pregnancy, and gang violence, heard and addressed from the youth perspective. I, as well as the other members of the GSY Council, feel that a youth-led approach to these issues is the best way of tackling them.

There have been many meetings in which Council members were able to meet and ask questions of representatives from various state agencies that deal with youth-related issues. These meetings have been invaluable in that we now have knowledge of who to contact with regard to any



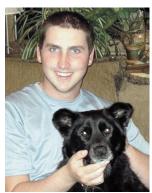
Since I have been on the Council, I have also attended the Public Narrative training with Marshall Ganz, where I learned the art of public narrative that has benefited me in terms of talking to youth groups in my community. I have also attended the special screening of HBO's "The Black List" in which Governor Patrick and other African-American professionals expressed their struggles and their accomplishments.

Recently, we worked on the Youth Summit, held this October. The Summit addressed education, jobs, teen pregnancy, and gang violence issues, as well as serving as the kick-off for the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP). It is our hope that over the next 10 years, the youth of Massachusetts will become sufficiently empowered and that the goals set forth in our agenda will have been accomplished.

It has been an honor being a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council and I look forward to continuing my term. It has been very rewarding to see that efforts are being made to help the youth in Massachusetts and that I am able to be apart of it all.

#### **Michael Mayes**

I am proud to be a part of the Youth Council because I believe that all 27 of the other members have become my friends. Additionally, I would like to thank Governor Patrick for his vision to let the Youth Council become a reality, and who believed that in order to develop youth-related programs, Massachusetts youth had to be asked what we want, believe and dream about. I would also like to thank Assistant Director of Community Affairs Anny Jean-Jacques, who has taught us so much and keeps us all working together. She is generally the person who recommends an event for us to attend and helps us prepare for it in order to do our best. Ron Bell, Director of Community Affairs, has been incredibly nice and keeps our meetings and activities moving along with a sense of humor and respect. He wanted a youth council because he believed in us. And finally, without Dahlia Bousaid, Acting Director of the Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development, there would be no Youth Council because she keeps us posted and makes sure we are organized and ready to go. These three people are the hardest-working men and women I have ever met.



Other meetings we attended had some surprising guests, such as Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, who told us that we are the future and can realize our dreams and have a real voice in government. His speech also encouraged me to do more volunteer work in my community,

such as the Martin Luther King Service Day, where I was privileged to volunteer alongside Governor Patrick. Also, the Marshall Ganz workshop training taught us so much about how to tell our stories, and this exercise also brought the Council members closer together. Being a part of the Youth Council has had a profound influence on my life.

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#### **Grant Jones**

I used to have a friend named Vinny, who had all the potential in the world. He was bright, funny and talented, yet the street life eventually consumed him. I still see him around but he is only a shadow of the person I knew in childhood. He became lost to drug addiction and crime as I stood by and watched. Throughout my childhood, I've had to simply sit and watch as people close to me, and my community as a whole, have succumbed to violence. In my Mattapan neighborhood we are surrounded by liquor stores, useless dollar stores and junk food, and poverty is never far from home. While I got a private school education, I've watched friends become jailbound. I sit on my couch, pretending the place in which I live doesn't have problems. This is the life I've had to lead for 17 years – that of a helpless bystander. And it was all because I was a teenager, because in our society, youth have traditionally been expected to be subservient, to listen and learn.

However, the Youth Council has completely changed my life. It has allowed me to become more involved than I ever dreamed possible at this age. It negates the role of the subservient teen and gives me the power to manifest my



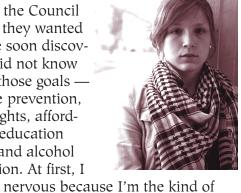
own change for Mattapan, instead of simply hoping that an adult will come along and do it for me. I feel blessed that every month and a half, 28 of the most intelligent and inspiring teens around Massachusetts, get to really take action on problems such as youth violence, poor education, and poverty that affect us in our day-to-day lives. I believe that if an individual is not part of the solution, he or she is part of the problem, no matter what the person's age. I believe that I need to help solve these issues in my neighborhood and am thankful every day

that it is possible for me to have a hand in shaping my community.

#### **Katie Malveira**

My experience with the Youth Council thus far has been very positive and life altering. I've learned that not only do youth have a voice but that in fact it's a very powerful voice and with the correct tools, our voices can be heard. The Council has given us those tools — such as adults who care, persistency, places to go, and a cause to fight for. This has helped me to become a stronger leader. At the same time, I've also learned that I should have more confidence and be more willing to approach people. At first, I was very nervous and was continuously thinking, "What if the youth that I am serving with don't like me?" "What if we do not get along?" However, now all the members are so well acquainted that I'm very comfortable with everyone.

Every one of the members went into the Council knowing what they wanted from it, but we soon discovered that we did not know how to attain those goals—youth violence prevention, LGBT youth rights, affordable housing, education reform, drugs and alcohol abuse prevention. At first, I



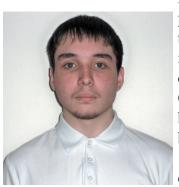
was extremely nervous because I'm the kind of person who needs a definite schedule or I freak out. Because this was the first Youth Council in Massachusetts, everyone realized that it could go in many different directions. I knew I just wanted to reach the youth and be more active in my community. At first, things started off very slow and it got to the point where the Council members decided that we had to take control. Ever since that meeting the Youth Council members have been leading and facilitating the meetings

My most memorable experience was the Marshall Ganz training because it solidified my comfort level with the other members. It was invigorating because all of the members were willing to share experiences that were so personal, it was breathtaking. And, for some reason it was during this training that Icould see where the Youth Council was headed and what we would get out of it. I have learned a great deal about myself, as well as others, and I take that with me whenever I go to a meeting, when I go out to volunteer, or when I lead the GSA in my school.



#### **Anibal Ramirez**

Being the eternal pessimist, I have always been both pragmatic and skeptical in my thinking. Consequently, at first, I was a bit wary of the idea of the Youth Council. I was skeptical about how much influence the Council would have, what



resources would be provided us, whether there would be any financial backing and other support for the Council. or if it would be merely a token body.

Upon arrival, however, I was immediately impressed by the

energy and drive of my fellow Council members

as well as their focus on the issues at hand. Being the first Youth Council is freeing in the sense that we are the ones able to establish precedent; however, it is also time-consuming in that we are the ones laying the foundation for future

youth councils. Though we might be considered constrained by being the first to create a footing for other councils to use in continuing and expanding on our work, we certainly do not show any restraint in our beliefs in using this magnificent opportunity to improve the quality of life for youth throughout the Commonwealth, both now and in the many years to follow.

#### **Danielle Pingue**

Entering the Council as a shy, introverted youth, I believed my contribution would be limited to sharing my own experience as a young person in the state. In actuality, I ended up being able to bring so much more to the Council. As a Council member, I am able to challenge preexisting ideas about Massachusetts' youth. Instead of relying solely on my own opinions and SELF views, I can contribute the ideas of friends or other adolescents who live in my community, allowing young people to have a



voice in the issues that affect them. Thus, I have become a bigger voice than I ever imagined, and the small role I so readily accepted when I joined the Council. has blossomed into one of my greatest responsibilities.

With confidence

in our ideas and the ability that we as youth have to make the right decisions, our advisors guided us through intense training sessions to enable us to better understand policy. As a result, each member began to feel as if they were part of one larger, cohesive unit that understood its strengths and limitations. We worked on encouraging each part of this unit to find its own voice, share its own story and, as we accepted new members, they introduced new ideas for our consideration.

Though it has only been a year, each member of the Youth Council is a strong and active part

> of the unit. As such. I now understand that my triumphs are the direct result of the support I have received from each Coun-

Surprisingly, we discovered we had a common initiative: to make an immediate and absolute impact on Massachusetts while creating a voice for young people.

— Danielle Pingue

cil member. As we move forward with our policy agenda and grassroots activism, I trust that the confident and outspoken young woman I have become will be an asset in adhering to our aim of creating a voice for all youth in the state.

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council wishes to acknowledge three new members who were recently appointed to replace outgoing members. Welcome aboard! Gillian O'Callaghan (Dukes County) Ivy Smith (Middlesex County)

**Masaye Fratkin (Hampshire County)** 

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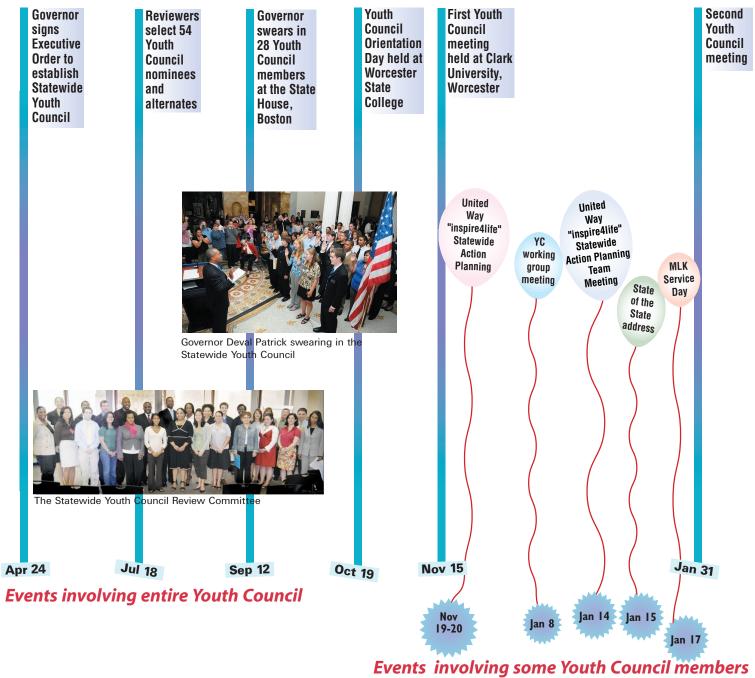
# What we've done together



## TIMELINE OF YOUTH COUNCIL



Ron Bell, Director of the Office of Community Affairs, at the announcement of the Statewide Youth Council

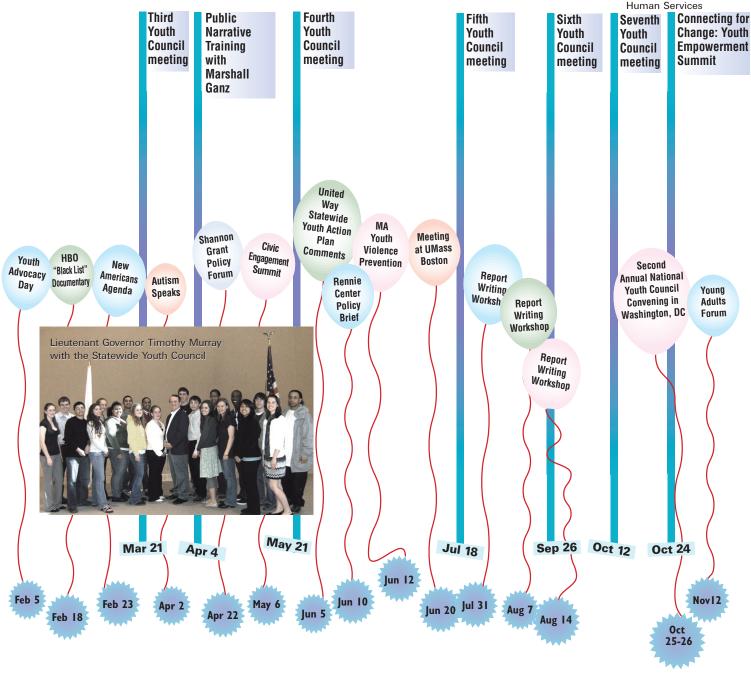


2008. 2009

## **EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**



Keynote speaker at Connecting for Change Summit: Secretary JudyAnn Bigby, Executive Office of Health &



# US US US US US

#### **WHO WE ARE**

by Natasha Gonzalez

The Youth Council is more than just an established group of young people. It has become an entity where an "us" mentality has been the driving force behind our initiatives. The Council has been molded into a single body with multiple people, opinions and personalities, all with the same interest in creating a better Massachusetts. I feel we have and will continue to address issues such as youth violence, education, and civic engagement — not only for youth but for all residents. Through meetings, trainings, guest speakers/panels and participation in key events we, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, have been able to establish ourselves as a group in relation to the needs of the Commonwealth.

# MEETINGS, CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

by Lillian Phuong

In the past year, the Youth Council has held many meetings, participated in many events and held numerous conference calls. Within these many gatherings, the Council has been able to get much accomplished.

Orientation for Youth Council members took place on October 19, 2008. During orientation, the members voiced their opinions on what it meant to be in the GSYC. Ground rules and expectations were established by the members themselves, and the Council set goals to strive for over the next two years.

During our first official meeting, on November 15, 2008, Assistant Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Marilyn Anderson Chase, came to speak. The goals that were set at Orientation were reiterated and the Council was split into three subcommittees: Structure, Issues, and Outreach. At this meeting, it was announced that, from this point on, all meetings would be facilitated by the members.

The second official meeting took place on January 31, 2009. At this meeting, Glenn Daly, Director of the Office of Youth Development, introduced us to Robert's Rules of Order. It was decided that in order to vote, a quorum was needed. In our case, we decided that a quorum of 21 members was needed to conduct any



voting. The Structure subcommittee set temporary meeting dates for the following two years and divided the Council into regional groups. They also decided to appoint one member as leader who would assist Anny Jean-Jacques, Assistant Director of the Office of Community Affairs, and organize notes and handouts for the members. Each region was also to have a chairperson. The

Outreach subcommittee proposed using the media to contact the public. The idea of a youth summit was also proposed as well as a smaller youth event that would take place in the summer before the summit. The Issues subcommittee decided to target the issue of youth violence and its prevention through education. At this meeting, the adult sponsors also announced that the youth members were the leaders, and that the sponsors were only there to provide advice and support.

At the Council's third meeting on April 4, a motion was made to accept Robert's Rules of Order. However, at that meeting the Council did not meet its quorum so a motion was made to lower the quorum to 18, and other members were contacted via telephone to vote on lowering the quorum and to accept Robert's Rules. In addition, the Issues subcommittee continued to work on preventing violence through education initiatives and the Structure subcommittee set a rule regarding how many meetings a Council member is allowed to miss. The Outreach subcommittee suggested creating a Youth Council website and the Council voted to accept this idea. Also at this meeting, Patrick Johnson from Barnstable County was elected as the Council Chair. The Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, Tim Murray, also dropped by to speak to the Council.

On May 16, the Council held its fourth meeting. Kevin Burke, Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, made a presentation. Also, remarks were made by Marilyn Anderson Chase. At this meeting, Council members were informed about the Governor's Readiness Cabinet, which was created to ensure the success of youth. Assistant Secretary Chase then presented an overview of the Youth Council budget for Fiscal Year 09. After this discussion, the meeting transitioned to talking about the upcoming Youth Summit with Laurie Jo Wallace from the Medical

Foundation. Youth Council member Stanley Narcisse introduced his forthcoming webpage to the Council.

A fifth meeting took place on June 20, which opened with a panel discussion between John Bynoe, Associate Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Sandra McCroom, Executive Director, Office of Grants and Research, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security; Carleen Pavlos, Director, Division of Violence and Injury Prevention, Department of

Public Health; and Jane Tewksbury, Commissioner, Department of Youth Services. After the discussion, Council members began to discuss the upcoming report to the Governor. In this discussion, Anny Jean-Jacques was asked to follow up with the Governor and ask about his expectations for the report. The report's format, structure and sections were

determined. Council members then discussed what to do with the surplus money from Fiscal Year 09 and five major ideas were proposed, including educational investment and purchasing software and equipment for the Council. The last topic discussed at this meeting was the Youth Summit.

(now).

Because it has proven difficult for all Council members to attend all meetings, conference calls have been made in between most meetings and events to keep the members informed and to maintain productivity. During these conference calls, business is conducted as usual and facilitators for the next meeting are trained. Also during the conference calls, the youth worked with Brad Blake, the Director of New Media and Online Strategy, Governor's office and also worked on organizing for the summit. A conference call was also facilitated by Laurie Jo Wallace from the Medical Foundation, concerning the Youth Council's two-year initiative.

#### **TRAININGS**

#### **ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER**

January 31, 2009 State House, Boston

by Jose Rodrigues

During our second meeting, on January 31 2009 Robert's Rules of Order was introduced to the Youth Council. For a large group, organization and order are essential in order to function efficiently. During our first meeting, our voting and methods of discussion were disparate and disorganized. A modified version of Robert's Rules of Order was presented to the group by Glenn Daly, Director of the Office of Youth Development. We adopted the modified version, as well as a quorum of 21 that was soon reduced to 18. We also decided to have a 2/3 majority required for a motion to pass. By having a chair, quorum and structured method of voting, we

have become much more efficient with our deliberations and discussions. With this and other organizational tools and methods we have learned this year, the Council can truly make an impact by maximizing effectiveness on voting and discussion so that we can start to make a difference and reduce

youth violence through education.

By hearing example stories from

our peer facilitators, we learned how

to evolve our narrative from a reflec-

(self), to the story of the Youth Coun-

cil as a group (us), and then our goals

for the future and how we are plan-

ning to pursue them as a council

tion on our personal experiences

#### **MARSHALL GANZ TRAINING**

April 4, 2009

Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge

by Lauren Logan

On April 4, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council participated in Marshall Ganz's Public Narrative Workshop. This workshop, held at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, was one of the most valuable events the Youth Council has had the pleasure of attending. We learned how to tell our own narrative stories which would be composed of three sections: the story of Self, the story of Us and the story of Now. By hearing example stories from our peer facilitators, we learned how to evolve our narrative from a reflection on our personal experiences (self), to the story of the Youth Council as a group (us), and then our goals for the future and how we are planning to pursue them as a Council (now).

The day-long workshop was broken up into the three sections of the public narrative we were working to create. For each section, we heard an introduction wherein one of the youth facilitators read that given section from their narrative. We then practiced that specific section for our own narrative in groups and developed it further based on feedback from other Council members. We chose several of our peers to share their

stories with the entire group so we could provide constructive suggestions on how their narratives could be improved.

The day ended with the sharing of several completed personal narratives, followed by additional feedback from the group. The Youth Council members and our adult sponsors received certificates of completion for the workshop. Personally, I found this workshop very useful in approaching the challenge of writing college essays. Marshall Ganz's training helped us to form a useful template for writing stories and essays. This type of knowledge is something we can carry with us for the rest of our lives and

use in any sort of writing in the future. I also found this training extremely helpful in identifying why I wanted to join the Youth Council, and pinpointed these goals as a group. By incorporating our own personal stories into the narrative, I was able to more effectively visualize

the road we are on as the Massachusetts Governor's Statewide Youth Council and the steps we need to take to see our dreams actually happen. One example of this is Connecting for Change: YEP Conference, an expense that we included in our 2010 budget based on how it

Learning about the fiscal bud-

gets has and will, continue to help

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our goal of empowering the youth



would benefit the youth of Massachusetts. The YEP Conference, held in October, stands for the "Youth Empowerment Project." Its goal is to

inform the youth of Massachusetts — through workshops, seminars and various activities — that they have a voice and the power to make a difference in their communities, their state and even their world. It is our goal that everything we include in our budget works toward achieving and accomplishing our mission of advocating and

empowering the youth of Massachusetts.

#### **BUDGET TRAINING MEETING**

May 18, 2009 State House, Boston

by Brianna Busby

On May 18, 2009, Youth Council members met to be trained on budget preparations and to discuss FY Budgets for 2009 and 2010. We learned about the fiscal year and how budgets are determined. We also learned about the necessity for predetermining and estimating what monies would be necessary for the future, by looking at just how much over or under the budget we were during the current term. As a result, we had a better understanding as to what expenses our 2010 Fiscal Budget would include. Learning about the fiscal budgets has and will, continue to help us establish budgets that include expenses that help us to achieve our goal of empowering the youth of Massachusetts by tackling the agendas of education, employment and gang violence. That our budgets will be able to provide the resources to address the issues facing youth in our communities is a critical issue and a major factor in determining how much funding will be needed for each fiscal year.

# EVENTS ATTENDED BY YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS

#### INTRODUCTION

by Jose Rodrigues

Diversity is the key to success with a group such as the Youth Council. The idea that each and every one of us has a different story, a different calling and a different idea is what keeps the Council together. The very fact that we are different makes us unique and equal. Each person on the Council has a different reason for applying and for becoming involved within the community. There is one basic thread throughout the Council: each and every single Council member wants to see change and wants to affect their community for the better. Council members have involved themselves in many different groups, organizations and pastimes, and by doing this, have been able to spread the word about the Council throughout the state. Highlights of the events we have attended are following.

#### STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

State House, Boston January 15, 2009

by Mirasia Talay Cotto McGahan

When I got to the State House with my friend Brooke, I discovered I had lost the seating information, so I just followed everyone, thinking I would see people I knew. I walked into a huge room and asked the woman in charge where we

were supposed to sit. She seated us next to some very important-looking people — all with Blackberry phones. I kept looking for my fellow Council members but they were nowhere to be found.

There were various speeches and thanks

given at the opening of the ceremony. I recall one very touching moment when some children were brought up to the podium and we heard the story about how their parents were serving in the war.

Finally, Governor Patrick was introduced and addressed both houses of the State Legislature. It was then that I realized the identity of all those important-looking people seated around me! The Governor addressed his future goals for the coming years. I was amazed how "cool" he was in his speech — tasteful and professional but welcoming at the same time.

Afterwards, I went to find my mother. I saw the Director of Community Affairs Ron Bell and he asked where I was sitting. I said we were in the "big room" and he looked at me funny and said that everyone else was in the Flag Room. I hadn't realized that I wasn't in the Flag Room! It was an amazing experience because I officially had my first contact with the "big shots"!

#### **STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**

State House, Boston January 15, 2009

by Lillian Phuong

Being at the State of the State Address was useful to me in so many ways. Not only is it important for the Youth Council members to be informed about what is happening in Massachusetts, but being able to hear the Governor speak and meeting him afterward was inspirational as well. Throughout the event, I was sitting with my adult sponsor and afterward, we discussed what an eloquent address it was.

#### MARTIN LUTHER KING SERVICE DAY

Roxbury Community College, Boston January 17, 2009

by Jose Rodrigues

Being on the Youth Council has opened many doors for me. Not only have I been able to meet some of my peers from across the state, but I have also been able to talk to government officials and others from many different back-

grounds. One such opportunity was MLK Service Day at Roxbury Community College, a day on which the Governor and others were able to give back to the community. I attended along with another Youth Council member and was not only able to meet

new people and do some good for the community, but was also able to meet and talk to the Governor and perform some community service with him. It was a great day, because I had the opportunity to talk to Governor Patrick as well as to give something back to the community.

#### **MARTIN LUTHER KING SERVICE DAY**

Roxbury Community College, Boston January 17, 2009

by Michael Mayes

I enjoyed Martin Luther King Day at Roxbury Community College. We met so many different people and had fun painting plant pots. Governor Patrick came and spoke about Dr. King. He said that Dr. King has inspired us all.

#### **YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY**

February 5, 2009 State House, Boston

by Estephania Villar

Youth Advocacy Day was a day for youth from all over the state to advocate at the State House for after-school programs. About 300 people were in attendance. The audience consisted of legislators, office managers, after-school workers, staff and young people. The event lasted for a few hours, and I spoke to the audience regarding Girls, Inc. of Lynn, and how cutting the funding of after-school programs would lead to increased youth violence and teen pregnancy. I also spoke about how after-school programs can function as a second home for teens such that, if they were to get cut, it would be as if they were homeless.

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Another point I brought up was that if there were no after-school programs, teens would be at home watching television and leading less productive lives.

#### **HBO BLACKLIST DOCUMENTARY**

February 18, 2009 Strand Theatre, Boston

by Stanley Narcisse

The HBO screening of "The Blacklist: Volume 2" was a great event. The Governor was present, as well as Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and many other public figures. It was uplifting to see prominent present-day African-American leaders, such as RZA and Governor Patrick, speak about their personal backgrounds, their upbringings, and their successes that made them who they now are. The documentary also featured accomplishments by African Americans throughout history. Being also an African American, I was inspired to be there representing the Youth Council. It gave me a deeper insight into both American and African-American history.

#### **NEW AMERICANS AGENDA**

February 23, 2009
The Boston Foundation, Boston

In July of 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed an Executive Order designed to integrate immigrants and refugees into the Commonwealth, thus launching the New Americans Agenda for Massachusetts. This Order calls for various state agencies and community organizations, to develop and deliver a series of policy recommendations that emphasize the positive integration of these communities into the economic and civic life of the Commonwealth.

#### by Jose Rodrigues

When I was contacted by the Governor's Office as to whether I wanted to become involved with the New Americans Agenda, I was interested in what it had to offer. I did some research and discovered that they hold many meetings across the state, analyzing problem areas such as education, youth and health care. In so doing, they then work out their recommendations to the Governor. I was able to attend two youth policy change meetings that were held in Boston. At first, I was very nervous and shy. There were people from many different organizations such as the Office of Refugees and Immigrants, as well as other groups and heads of programs. Each time I spoke, I realized that everyone there valued my opinion because, as one of a few immigrant youth in the room, I was the closest to the problem. I learned a great deal

about immigration problems across the state that need to be addressed. I hope that my future work with the Youth Council will continue to lead me to opportunities and ways to make an impact as did the New Americans Agenda meeting .

#### **AUTISM SPEAKS**

April 2, 2009 Fenway Park, Boston

by Michael Mayes

Because my membership in the Youth Council has encouraged me to speak up and become more involved, I volunteered to be the keynote speaker at the Autism Speaks Award Dinner at Fenway Park. I stood up in front of over 300 parents of autistic kids and described my experience growing up as an autistic person. I described how I learned to speak, and then through the Governor's Council, was able to speak for other autistic people who have a much harder time than I do. At the Autism Speaks Award Ceremony, I was able to tell my story. I've been lucky because I got the right therapies. Because of the willingness of so many people to give me a chance, I learned to speak up not only for myself but for others like me. Some parents in the audience said that gave them hope for their children with autism and the courage to keep working as hard as they could. That an autistic person could become part of the Governor's Youth Council was inspiring to them.

I also spent a day at the State House this spring, not as a Youth Council member, but as Mike Mayes. I lobbied legislators about the need for anti-bullying laws to help protect youth with autism.

#### **SHANNON GRANT POLICY FORUM**

April 22, 2009 Holy Cross, Worcester

The Shannon Community Safety Initiative (CSI) Technical Assistance Meeting brings together 100 people associated with the Shannon CIS program, including community-based organizations and law enforcement officials. Approximately 20 youth from across the state also participated in this event.

#### by Eddie Mercado

The purpose of the Shannon Grant Policy Forum was to educate the audience on the issue of youth violence prevention. In looking around the room, I noticed that a lot of adults seemed interested that some teens had shown up. I learned that because of stimulus money, there would be more opportunities for youth summer jobs. This affected me personally because teens are going through a tough time with the economy going downhill. There were a couple of youth who said they were trying to help their communities but were being harassed by the local police for past offenses. They may have been in a gang but were trying to change their lives in order to help others. There were also some who said they didn't really feel safe in their own communities. Some teens were amazed that there was a statewide youth council and saw it as an opportunity for change.

I felt that it was important for me to be there because I wanted to set an example for other teens who deserve a second chance. We were gathered into a group discussion where we shared personal experiences about things that have happened in our communities. Some teens stepped forward to present to the whole audience what they had talked about in the group discussions. It was really exciting to see them stepping up to adults and voicing that we want power and respect. I was glad to be a part of this event.

#### **SHANNON GRANT POLICY FORUM**

April 22, 2009 Holy Cross, Worcester

by Danielle Pingue

As a participant in the Shannon Grant Policy Forum at Holy Cross in Worcester, I gained insight into the role state officials and community organizations play in attempting to lower the youth crime rate. The meeting introduced me to the fundraising and fiscal necessities that come with tackling crime in Massachusetts, as well as the way that individual community organizations could affect that fiscal balance. Along with fellow Youth Council member Eddie Mercado, I was able to provide knowledge to a diverse group of grassroots organizations, community sponsors, and local officials about violence from the perspective of youth who have been tempted to join or personally afflicted by youth crime. In addition to our testimonies, the youth in attendance were given a forum to express their concerns regarding the role of state and local officials in youth violence as well as provide commentary on ways that these agencies could improve.

I felt like a valuable contributor to the Shannon Grant Policy Forum because I was able to raise questions about issues that had not been raised by other participants. I also felt that Eddie and I left the meeting with a better understanding that new steps needed to be taken to tackle youth crime and that learning more about the causes of

youth violence would help to produce a set of active measures that can bring about change. The forum was also influential in that I was able to take back what I had learned to the entire Youth Council so that we could propose ways in which youth could assist state and local officials in raising funds to deter violence in youth through more community involvement and youth activism.

#### **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT**

May 6, 2009 UMass Dartmouth

Youth Council members were invited to give presentations of their experiences in the Council and as community leaders to a group of middle school students who have been involved in community service. Dr. Tom Sander from Harvard University was the keynote speaker and was followed panel discussions and breakout groups. The event was hosted by Center for Civic Engagement at UMass, Dartmouth.

#### by Patrick Johnson

Sometimes an experience is best summed up by a single moment. The Civic Engagement Summit, held at UMass Dartmouth's campus, was attended by me and two other Youth Council members. We walked through the campus, which was lively with students and activities. We located the building assigned to our event and, in a quiet lobby, we waited for the students. The auditorium filled and Mike Mayes, Jose Rodrigues and I each spoke, telling our stories. All of us were filled with energy.

Afterwards, a powerful moment occurred for us all. Mike, who is autistic, gave a speech about his experiences. A young teacher then walked up to him, and asked Mike if he would speak to one of his students who also had autism. Being the kind of person he is, Mike obliged him. As they spoke, the younger boy, who was short with blonde hair, was shy until Mike asked him about his Pokémon shirt. Mike then told him, "Never let anyone tell you what you can or can't do, you're no different than anyone else." I'll never forget that moment because it meant a lot to me.

## UNITED WAY SUCCESS FOR LIFE ACTION PLAN

November 19-20, 2008 Hanover Insurance Group, Worcester

The United Way of Mass Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services entered a collaboration with the Forum for Youth Investment to develop a public/private sector

youth policy framework. The work, guided by a Statewide Action Planning Team, drew on the expertise and experience of more than two hundred citizens, activists, educators, youth development workers and young people from around the state. The resulting "Success for Life" framework was endorsed by the Governor's Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet on November 16, 2009.

#### by Stanley Narcisse

I was invited by the United Way to attend a planning process in which state, community agencies and youth will work together to develop a statewide plan to help youth in Massachusetts. I then viewed data and participated in small group discussions where we identified goals and performance measures. Then everyone agreed on a final plan, which is called the "Success for Life" framework. One of the major goals of the plan is to give youth more of a voice in state government and in their communities.

#### **RENNIE CENTER FORUM**

June 10, 2009

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

The Rennie Center co-hosted a public event on June 10th to accompany the release of a policy brief titled Toward Interagency Collaboration: The Role of Children's Cabinets.

#### by Patrick Johnson

Youth Council member Natasha Gonzalez, Acting Director of the Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development Dahlia Bousaid, Assistant Director of the Governor's Office of Community Affairs Anny Jean-Jacques and I spent an early morning with muffins, coffee and orange juice in a crowded room filled with educators from across the state. They had gathered to celebrate and discuss a policy brief that was being released on the topic of children's cabinets. Here we were, Natasha and I, being treated as VIPs — two college freshmen being put on a panel, given microphones and being treated as equal to professionals from across the Commonwealth. It felt like progress, that we were being listened to and that our input was considered valuable.

## YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

June 12, 2009 Crowne Plaza Hotel, Worcester

The theme of this event, sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, was "Safety in Numbers: The Power of Prevention and Partnerships for At-Risk Youth." Its focus included: strategies for building successful (multi-disciplinary) partnerships/collaborations, best practices for youth violence prevention programming and youth development programming.

#### by Chris Alvarez

On June 12, I attended the Youth Violence Prevention Conference in Worcester that was sponsored by the MA Department of Public Health. The purpose of this meeting was to build partnerships and collaborations with police officers, health providers, judges, and youth service organizations regarding violence prevention in Massachusetts. The keynote speaker presented a model for bringing together different organizations to address the problems of youth violence from various perspectives. In addition, there were workshops on a number of topics related to violence and from a number of different perspectives. Most of the people in attendance were representing social service organizations, the field of criminal justice, city representatives, community centers, health providers, faith leaders, and some youth representatives.

I spoke on a panel with a judge, the president of a Boys Club, the president of a YMCA, a doctor, a human services provider, an adult representative from a youth organization, and a probation officer. I was the only youth representative speaking.

We began the panel discussion with three questions:

- 1. Give an overview of your organization
- 2. Why are you called to this work?
- 3. Why do you think violence prevention is important in your community?

When I spoke on the panel, I shared my personal testimony of experiencing violence in my community. Earlier this year while I was waiting for a bus, I was attacked by a gang member who claimed I was "on his street." I tried to explain that I was only waiting for the bus but he didn't listen and tried to stab me with a knife. Thankfully, he failed. I defended myself by knocking him on the ground and he left saying he would be back and that I should "watch my back." This experience is not unusual for many youth. As a panel member, I shared my story, but also the need for all of us to work together to find solutions and to build a sense of interconnectedness. Youth violence is not just a police issue, it is a result of a lack of opportunity, resources, safe schools, and school discipline policies that push young people out of school and onto the streets.

We know what problems are affecting us and

our communities and we know what some of the solutions should be. Youth need to be valued and respected for our contributions and our vision because we are the future. I also shared my experience as a youth leader with the Alliance to Develop Power, a community organization that fights for justice in low income communities, ranging from youth violence to education reform to affordable housing to worker justice. As a member of the Governor's Youth Council, I bring my experience both as an individual youth and also as a representative of the hundreds of youth in my region and organization who have similar experiences.

At this conference, I was able to build relationships and possible collaborations with other youth organizations and social service organizations in order to address the issues of youth violence. I also got a better perspective on how other organizations and potential allies see youth violence and what they are doing from their perspective. It was important that I was on this panel because I was the only youth speaker representative at the day-long conference. While the experiences of the other people and agencies is important, without the voice of the youth — those of us who are directly affected — we will not be able to identify solutions that are meaningful to us. I am proud to represent the Governor's Youth Council and thousands of youth in the Commonwealth.

## CONNECTING FOR CHANGE: THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

October 24, 2009 Best Western Royal Plaza, Worcester

by Brianna Busby

After many meetings, conference calls and preparation, we decided that we would provide the youth of Massachusetts a day in which they would have the opportunity to connect with other youth and youth organizations within the Commonwealth, and become more informed about various opportunities available to them. We also wanted the day to be the beginning of "Youth Empowerment" and so we decided that it would be the beginning of what we would call *Connecting for Change*: the Youth Empowerment Project, otherwise known as YEP.

On October 24 we facilitated a conference that brought together approximately 600 young people from across the state. At this event, young people attended various workshops hosted by youth organizations on the topics of civic engagement, education, job opportunities, teen pregnancy prevention and youth violence prevention and

other issues. We also explored how youth can make positive change by becoming involved in their communities and connecting with other youth. EOHHS Secretary JudyAnn Bigby and DPH Commissioner John Auerbach were keynote speakers.

The conference was a chance for the youth of Massachusetts to be heard, to become more knowledgeable, to connect with other youth, and to realize that they can make a difference. From the smiles on their faces and the interest shown in their eyes, it was apparent by the end of the conference that the day was a success. We look forward to following up with the youth participants and various organizations that were apart of this conference so that we can continue our efforts of empowering the youth of Massachusetts.

#### SECOND ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENING OF THE AMERICAN'S YOUTH COUNCIL NETWORK

October 25-26, 2009 Washington, DC

by Jose Rodrigues

On the weekend of October 24, 2009, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council of Massachusetts had the great opportunity to participate in the Second Annual National Convening of the American's Youth Council Network. This Network is made up of several state, county and local youth councils from across the nation. The goal of the Council is to foster new ideas and connections between youth councils across the nation, to aid states, counties and cities in building new youth councils, and to create a Federal Youth Council the role of which would be to advise Congress or the President on youth issues. As a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council I had the great honor of representing our Council and the youth of Massachusetts in Washington, DC at this conference.

At first I was very nervous and unable to envision what would come out of the meeting, not to mention the fact that the Governor's Statewide Youth Council had just put on our biannual youth summit, in which over six hundred youth from across the state attended. So naturally, I was exhausted.

The National Youth Council Convening was a two-day event. On the first day, Sunday, October 25, Council members met with The Forum for Youth Investment staff to discuss what The Forum does and who they are. They introduced

their national partners, and allowed time for many of the Youth Council members to connect. We discussed what we have been working on and what have been the challenges for our youth councils, and the idea of a Federal Youth Council. I was shocked to find out how different some of the youth councils were from one another. I can recall one council member who said that her meetings are run as "a party with a purpose" whereas other councils use the complete version of Robert's Rules of Order; I would like to think that our council is a mix of this.

The second day a few councils were asked to speak on a panel at the Senate in front of an audience. I was honored to be one of the members on the panel, and discuss what the Massachusetts Governor's



Statewide Youth Council has been doing and how it was formed. I was pleased to see that everyone was impressed with the diversity of our Youth Council, how quickly it has developed, and how much we have accomplished.

To close the second day, each youth council member was to have had an appointment with a state legislator. I was unable to make contact with any of our state legislators before leaving for DC. However, the youth council from Iowa was gracious enough to let us attend their meeting with them. I learned a lot from talking to legislators while observing the Iowa youth council's meeting with their legislative representatives.

After this meeting, Dahlia Bousaid and I decided to walk into Senator John Kerry's office. We entered and were able to make an appointment with Mr. Doug Frost, Senator John Kerry's Legislative Correspondent. I was able to tell Mr. Frost about what the Massachusetts Youth Council is doing, how it formed, and discuss many of the initiatives that Massachusetts is undertaking to address youth issues such as the Governor's Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet, and the report that is being submitted by them. I was also able to ask Mr. Frost about how Senator Kerry would feel about a Federal Youth Council, if he knew of any grants to support this Council as well as other statewide initiatives, and ask if he could see the Senator using the Youth Council as a sounding board for youth issues he's

working to address. Mr. Frost answered that Senator Kerry would be very supportive of a Federal Youth Council, and was supportive of the idea of the Massachusetts Youth Council being a sounding board for youth issues that the Senator might be working on.

Personally, I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to represent Massachusetts and the Governor's Statewide Youth Council at this event. There were many ideas and conversations shared over the two days that I can bring back to the Council and that we will benefit from.

#### YOUNG ADULTS FORUM

November 12, 2009 Cape Cod

by Patrick Johnson

On the evening of Thursday, October 12, I traveled down to Cape Cod from Boston, with members of the Governor's Offices of Community Affairs and Grassroots Governance to serve on a panel for a young adults forum entitled "What's Your Massachusetts?" The forum brought together young people and young professionals from across the Cape and Islands to discuss the problems they face and their solutions for the future. We were joined by the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki, who painted a sobering, yet optimistic and rational picture of the problems the state is currently facing, and some solutions to the problems of Affordable Housing, Entrepreneurship, Rights for New Americans and creating a job market that can retain young people.

The most powerful part of the night for me was listening to the story of one of the panelists, who was born, and spent several years living, in Brazil, but has been living in America for over 10 years. What struck me was that she was not conspicuous, didn't have trouble speaking English and captured the attention of everyone in the room. It reminded me that there are so many people in our everyday lives, who are being shut out and disadvantaged, but don't feel right complaining and try to tough it out. These are the invisible citizens of this country, people who work hard and have unlimited potential, but are shut out by the system and don't feel right complaining. This young woman worked hard to earn an Abigail Adams scholarship, but was told she could not receive the aid that came with it. It's a good thing she is so determined to be successful, because some day she will be a leader in our state fighting to finish the work of the New Americans Agenda.

# Where we're going

# NOW



**NOW NOW NOW NOW NOW NOW** NOW NOW NOW

#### **OUR ROAD MAP**

by Jose Rodrigues

In our first few months, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has accomplished a lot. It has been able to bring together a diverse group of youth from across the state with various and different backgrounds. We have connected with other youth across the state through individual events and have taken personal initiatives in our own lives through activism and activities in our own communities, as well as events representing the Youth Council such as the United Way

meeting, the New
Americans Agenda,
and others. Together,
we have bridged
regional gaps, have
made realizations
about other people's
lives and what they
have been through,
and have discussed
and realized the
differences between
the Berkshires and



Boston, as well as the commonalities.

We have educated ourselves on fiscal budgets and attended public narrative trainings that helped us to hone our organizational and facilitation skills. We have been able to take the work we have done and organize a statewide initiative which was attended by over 600 youth, in which our goal was to educate youth of all different backgrounds about civic engagement and becoming leaders in our community. We have built partnerships in our state and on the national level with The Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21 initiatives, the America's Network of Youth Councils, and those youth councils that were able to attend the second annual convening of the America's Network. I was able to represent the Governor's Statewide Youth Council and the youth of Massachusetts at the second annual convening of the America's Network of Youth Councils.

Through these past events, suggestions for how the Youth Council should proceed have been drafted. During, the convening of the Youth Council Network, I noticed that each youth council needed three things to become a successful and efficient council:

Structure

- An efficient method of outreach
- Core issues that can be addressed and corrected through the engagement of young people throughout the state.

It's no coincidence that these three subcommittees were formed during one of our first meetings to get the Youth Council up and running. For the Governor's Statewide Youth Council to continue as an effective and efficient body, I believe that we need to borrow from other youth councils, learn from their mistakes and successes, build on our own ideas and improve these three areas of our

Youth Council.

First, the structure and organizational tools of the Youth Council need to be improved. Unfortunately, we have not yet set up strict bylaws for the Council. Although this seems like a daunting task, other youth councils that have been in place for years could serve as

a model. By borrowing their ideas for participation, rules and contracts, and defined roles for each executive board and member, we could set up a system that works. As I witnessed in Washington, DC, the Statewide Youth Council has built many partnerships and connections throughout the state and has successfully held a youth summit, which many other states or councils have been unable to do. I am very proud of how much effort the Commonwealth has put into its programs for its young people.

These relationships, however, need to be strengthened by following up with the participants of other youth councils and getting feedback from Massachusetts' youth so we can look for regional projects and activist opportunities to participate in. Finally, by continuing to learn from others and keeping in touch with the youth of Massachusetts, we can improve those issues that the youth find most pressing. By becoming civically engaged, they can make a difference in a broad range of social issues.

Ultimately, it would be a goal of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council to have a young person on every board and commission across the state so that no issue or topic is discussed without the input of the youth of Massachusetts. Hopefully,

with the Network of Councils, the youth of Massachusetts will also be able to weigh in on federal issues as well.

**GRASSROOTS MEETINGS** 

by Patrick Johnson

One of the things we as a Council feel strongly about is following the example of Governor Patrick's administration and take our energy to the grassroots and local levels. In our second year we have established the goal of holding meetings in every county, getting our message out and most especially, getting input from our fellow youth. These meetings would focus around the question: as youth in Massachusetts, what everyday obstacles do you face and how do you feel your energies could be put to better use to improve the Commonwealth?

#### **WEBSITE**

by Stanley Narcisse

The website I'm working on for the Governor's Youth Council is to help promote the Youth Council. It's being created through a social networking site for the purpose of doing networking within Massachusetts to bring attention to the

Youth Council so that we gain credibility with outside sources. It also can serve as an information venue to inform Council members of developments and events. In the interim, the present web address of the Youth Council is <a href="www.mass.gov/">www.mass.gov/</a> governor/youthcouncil.

#### **ALUMNI PROGRAM**

by Mirasia McGahan

We as a Council would like to create an alumni program for Council members after their term is up. The alumni program would be involved in the selection process for the future members. They would do this by reading applications and helping things run smoothly threw the transition period. The alumni would take part in the orientation and to welcome new members into the Council. The alumni program would also be there for help, support and to give advice. Some alumni may have interest in being adult sponsors to some of the new Council members. The alumni program is intended for those who have served and want to still be connected with the group and to also give help in any way to the Governor and the Youth

Council.

#### **CONNECTING FOR CHANGE:** THE PLANNING PROCESS

by Katie Malveira

The idea of hosting a youth conference proved to be a great success. Youth Council members, with the help of Assistant Director of Community Affairs Anny Jean-Jacques, and Dahlia Bousaid, Acting Director of the Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development, developed the ideas of how the conference would run, what its name would be and what topics would be discussed. Nonetheless, this did not all happen instantaneously. A small group of Council members volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to plan the various sessions that were to take place

> at the Connecting for Change Youth Initiative.

Some of the major decisions about the conference were made at a meeting in which all of the Youth Council members were present. First, the theme of civic engagement was chosen. The subcommittee took this concept and formed a conference around it.

Subcommittee members met numerous times at the State House, while other members not on the subcommittee were encouraged to join the discussion through a conference call.

The first session of the conference, called the Brainstorm Session, was first decided by through relentless planning on the part of the subcommittee. It was then presented to other Youth Council members and accepted as an official part of the conference.

The subcommittee followed this same procedure in planning the other aspects of the conference, such as the Strategic Planning Session. A great deal of time and hard work by subcommittee members were put into these planning sessions, as well as by Anny Jean-Jacques and Dahlia Bousaid. Through the holding of numerous meetings the State House, sending e-mails and making conference calls, the Connecting for Change Youth Initiative was successful.

We intend to use this same strategy in planning and developing future events, particularly with respect to achieving our goal of connecting with other youth groups around Massachusetts.

#### **OUR ADULT SPONSORS**

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has benefited from the outstanding dedication and commitment of adult sponsors. While not required as part of the application process, each Youth Council member was asked to identify a caring adult that could help support the youth's active participation on the Council. Adult sponsors were asked to fulfill the following roles:

- Serve as a mentor to the Youth Council Member
- Commit to serve for two years (unless Council member turns 21 before the end of their term)
- Attend quarterly Youth Council meetings and assist in preparation and debriefing for each meeting
- Connect the youth member to leadership trainings, educational events and development opportunities
- Embrace the philosophy of a youth-led approach
- 6. Provide transportation for youth member to Council-related meetings and events
- Help the youth member identify community impact projects and encourage civic engagement among the local youth population
- Maintain regular communications with youth member

The adult sponsors far exceeded our expectations. Instead of meeting quarterly as originally envisioned, the Council has averaged monthly meetings. This required them to travel hundreds more miles than originally anticipated. More meetings led to more responsibilities for the youth, as well as the need for higher levels of support from adults to assist youth in carrying out their collaborative work. They have also participated in dozens of conference calls and emails discussions. Additionally, adult sponsors were directly involved with the planning, coordination and support of the conference that launched the Statewide Youth Initiative held this past October. At that conference, they served as monitors and co-facilitators with Youth Council members.

The Council as a whole wishes to sincerely thank and acknowledge all the adults who have given so much of themselves to support our cause, including:

Maura Kerse-McMillin Sally-Ann Imes Timothy Geller Joe McGrath Christian McCloskey James Powell Barbara Hildt

Catherine Dhingra Lindy Whiton Lisa McGahan Ruth DiCristoforo Caroline Murray Cynthia Boyle Talitha Abramsen Gregg Croteau Peter McEachern Peter Swenson Sandra Rego Andrew McDonagh Sharron Busby Catherine Mayes Joseph Corazzini Tony Smith

# THE STAFF, WORKING GROUP AND VOLUNTEERS

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council was developed and supported by a Working Group, staff and volunteers consisting of state, municipal and non-profit staff, and youth. The Council wishes to gratefully acknowledge all the staff and volunteers who have supported our efforts, including the following individuals:

#### Core Staff:

Ron Bell, Director, Community Affairs

Anny Jean-Jacques, Assistant Director, Community Affairs

Marilyn Anderson Chase, Assistant Secretary, Office of Children Youth and Families, MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Glenn Daly, Director, Office of Youth Development, EOHHS

Dahlia Bousaid, Youth Development Specialist, Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development, MA Department of Public Health

#### Working Group and Volunteers:

Elizabeth Clay, Director, Grassroots Governance Gregg Croteau, Director, UTEC

Tito Jackson, Massachusetts Office of Business Development

Ron Marlow, Undersecretary, Access and Opportunity/A&F

Michele Norman, Department of Education Cynthia Loesch, Director, BOLD TEENS

Darryl Moss, Mayoral Aide, City of Springfield Sophy Sam, Youth Representative, Middlesex County

Eddie Mercado, Youth Representative, Middlesex County

Shanaya Coke, Youth Representative, Suffolk County

Lori Nelson, Director, Community Outreach, Ten Point Coalition

RJ McGrail, Labor & Workforce Development

Jennifer James, Undersecretary, Labor & Workforce Development

Elizabeth Cardona, Director, Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor

Brad Blake, Director, New Media and Online Strategy

We also wish to particularly acknowledge the support of EOHHS Secretary Dr. JudyAnn Bigby.

#### **OUR SUPPORTERS**

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council wishes to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations for their generous support:

#### MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Office of Youth Development

The Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee Department of Public Health, Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development

#### **Department of Public Health Office of Youth Violence Prevention**

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack

The University of Massachusetts Medical School, **MICEO** 

#### THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council was selected through an open competitive process that required the review of over 300 applications from a diverse Review Committee. The Governor's Statewide Youth Council wishes to thank the 48-member Review Committee listed below for their efforts.

Governor's Office

Office of Community Affairs

Ron Bell

Anny Jean-Jacques

Legal Counsel

Abim Thomas

Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor

Elizabeth Cardona

Constituent Services Arthur Natella

Daniela DeCaro

Grassroots Governance Christina Mills

Operations/Scheduling

Jacqueline Barton

Executive Office of Health & Human Services Secretary JudyAnn Bigby

Jill Bassett

Kathy Betts

Glenn Daly

**Executive Office of Transportation** 

Ann O'Neill

Juan Flores

Swee Wong Wagner

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

R.J. McGrail

Executive Office of Administration and Finance

Ron Marlow

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Ethan Tavan

Department of Youth Services

Edward Dolan

Barbara Morton

John Brennan

Department of Social Services

Maureen Messeder

Department of Mental Health

Ann Cappocia

Department of Education

Michele Norman

Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board

Tamika Correia

Legislative Branch

Shaynah Barnes

Union (AFL-CIO)

Tim Sullivan

Massachusetts Office of Business Development

Tito Jackson

Commonwealth Corporation

Edgar Howe

Florie Reddish

Samantha Shusterman

Nikki Bynoe

Susan Lange

City of Springfield

Denise Jordan

Darryl Moss

Community Innovators Lab at MIT

Dulari Tahbildar

Non-Profit Agencies

Laurie Jo Wallace

Rahsaan Hall

Aia Jones

Lori Nelson

Amanda Hillman

Manny Tikili

Gladys Lebron Martinez

Interns/Youth Representatives

Patrick Meyers

Nana Agyeman

Jennifer Liu

Gerrit Betz

Stacey Harris

#### By His Excellency

#### DEVAL L. PATRICK GOVERNOR EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 501

#### Creating the Governor's Statewide Youth Council

WHEREAS, youth across the Commonwealth are community residents, students and leaders; WHEREAS, youth are acutely aware of the challenges that face our schools, and are therefore uniquely positioned to develop creative solutions to ensure Massachusetts provides top notch education to all its students;

WHEREAS, youth violence affects communities, families and schools across the Commonwealth, claiming lives and causing immeasurable pain to victims and their families;

WHEREAS, youth are motivated to get involved in their communities and are eager for civic engagement opportunities;

WHEREAS, providing opportunities for the youth of Massachusetts to address the problems facing our communities through assuming leadership roles, working together and cultivating problem-solving skills will ensure a stronger workforce and democracy for the future;

WHEREAS, notwithstanding their ideas, energy and commitment, too often the voices of Massachusetts youth are not heard;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Deval L. Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. 1, do hereby establish the Statewide Youth Council as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby established the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, which shall be overseen by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The Council will make recommendations to the Governor on issues the youth of the Commonwealth are uniquely positioned to address, including but not limited to civic engagement, education and youth violence.

Section 2. The Council shall consist of two youth representatives from each county in the Commonwealth, who shall be appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall designate the Council's Chair. Council members must be between the ages of 14 and 20. Interested candidates shall submit a personal essay and include a letter of reference from an adult familiar with their strengths and interests including but not limited to youth organization leaders, school officials (including teachers), employees of the Department of Youth Services or the Department of Social Services. Any additional application procedures shall be established by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Governor's Office of Community Affairs. Section 3. All members of the Council will serve without compensation in an advisory capacity and at the pleasure of the Governor. Members shall serve for no longer than two years or until they turn 21, whichever first occurs. The Council will meet no fewer than four times a year, and at such times and places as determined by the Secretary for Health and Human Services or her designee. The Secretary and/or her designees, in consultation with the Governor's Office of Community Affairs, will oversee the meetings. Council members shall not be considered employees of the Commonwealth for any purpose.

Section 4. The Governor may direct the Council to form subcommittees to focus on particular challenges facing Massachusetts youth. The Governor may designate persons with relevant subject matter expertise or experience to consult with the subcommittees. Such persons will serve on these subcommittees without compensation in an advisory capacity and at the pleasure of the Governor. These subcommittees will carry out the functions assigned to them and report to the Council as directed.

Section 5. This Executive Order shall continue in effect until amended, superseded, or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston this 24th day of April in the year of our Lord two thousand and eight and of the Independence of the United States, two hundred and thirty-two.

DEVAL L. PATRICK GOVERNOR Commonwealth of Massachusetts

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN Secretary of the Commonwealth

